# SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

**15th Year of Publication**

**The Independent Bulletin of Science Policy**

Volume XV, Number 12 | P.O. Box 6226A, Washington, D.C. 20015 | July 15, 1985

# Star Wars Invitation Gets Cold Response in Europe

*London.* American overtures for Europe to join the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) have so far produced the unintended effect of pushing the Europeans to start their own research programs in technologies similar to those under development for the SDI anti-missile scheme.

The invitation to join has been pushed hard in European capitals by a long procession of high-level visitors from Washington, including SDI chief Lt. General James Abrahamson, Defense Secretary Weinberger, and even presidential Science Adviser George A. Keyworth II. The response, at best, luke warm, reflects a broad European feeling that whether the system is leakproof or only slightly porous, it is likely to make the world a lot more dangerous.

France has already rejected the American approaches. But, Europe being as fractious as ever, that doesn't mean that SDI must proceed without European participation. Individual companies and research institutes

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## House Bill Aims to Revive Money for University Labs

An opening hearing will be held in the House July 30 on what is expected to be a long and determined campaign to revive federal support for laboratory construction in universities and colleges. Legislation for this purposes calls for establishing a $10-billion, 10-year program jointly financed by major federal research agencies and various non-federal sources.

Nothing will happen quickly, certainly not this late in the legislative season or in the current anti-deficit atmosphere. But the troops have been mobilizing for a long time on this cause, the self-serving but alarming studies have piled up, and the situation is probably riper than it's ever been for getting that money flowing again. Starting in the mid-1950s and tapering off in the 1970s, it used to come in big amounts, but with only special exceptions in the past decade, construction money has been excluded from the budgets of the agencies that support academic science.

***Legislation Advances to Reestablish National Bioethics Commission—Page 5***

The hearing will focus on a new legislative proposal, the University Research Facilities Revitalization Act of 1985 (HR 2823), introduced last month by Rep. Don Fuqua (D-Fla.), Chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee. Fuqua, who has heard many tales of decrepit academic real estate during hearings over the past several years, will himself be the lead witness, before one of his own

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## In Brief

**There's been no progress toward renewed relations between the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and its Soviet counterpart since the two agreed last January to work toward that goal (SGR Vol. XV, No. 2). In the latest of a series of communications, the NAS has rejected a Soviet draft of a detailed exchange agreement. NAS sources say it fails to reflect the January understanding that US scientists would be allowed some influence over the selection of Soviet scientific visitors to the US. The provision is considered important because of the Soviet practice of sending hacks and keeping their top researchers off the exchange circuit.**

*As passed by the Senate, the Omnibus Defense Authorization Act includes full funding of the Adminstration's request for $25 million for the DOD-University Research Initiative, which is intended to create a mini-NSF at DOD. An earmarking of $1 million for Syracuse University was the work of Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY), an alumnus of that institution.*

**From scattered sites around Washington, the overgrown staff of the American Association for the Advancement of Science will be consolidated August 1 in rented space in a downtown office building, at 1333 H St. Nw. The boxy, vertically louvered building that the AAAS has occupied at 1515 Massachusetts Ave. Nw., will thereafter take on a new role, as the Embassy of Tunisia.**

*One of the greatest gatherings of modern physics will take place Nov. 12-14 in Cambridge, Mass., at an international symposium commemorating the centennial of Neil Bohr's birth. It's under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which says that attendees are expected from a dozen countries "and, possibly, the Soviet Union."*

# . . . Fuqua Bill Reserves Money for R&D Have-Nots

*(Continued from page 1)*

subcommittees—Science, Research, and Technology, chaired by Rep. Doug Walgren (D-Pa.).

In a statement that accompanied introduction of the bill, Fuqua said that half the physical plant of all universities and colleges is more than 25 years old and one-quarter of it was built prior to World War II. The wish list for renovation and expansion, collected by the National Science Foundation, the Defense Department, and other agencies, amounts to many billions.

The witness scheduled to follow Fuqua is Frank Press, President of the National Academy of Sciences, whose thinking about a new program of federal and non-federal construction money is visible in the Fuqua formula. Press offered that idea in a speech last April (SGR Vol. XV, No. 8), and has since been pushing it in various circles.

The final witness will be Bernadine Healy, Deputy Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, which knows that the laboratory-building situation on campus is often poor and even shocking in spots. But OSTP Director George A. Keyworth II and his crew have maintained good relations with the political wing of the White House by shunning the role of lobbyists for academic science. In that way, they have effectively delivered robust budgets to university science, but they must be discreet.

Fuqua's bill is crafted to satisfy various different interests on this issue. To broaden the base of financial support, it calls for the federal contribution to come from 10 percent set-asides from the research funds awarded to universities by the six major agencies in the business—the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, NASA, and the Departments of Defense, Energy, and Agriculture. The bill also seeks to assure there will be additional money appropriated to the agencies, so they won't resort to satisfying the construction mandate by robbing their research accounts.

Since the already-rich universities have developed superior sensors for pinpointing new bundles of money in Washington, the Fuqua bill specifies that at least 15 percent of the funds set aside each year for facilities must be reserved for colleges and universities below the top 100 in federal R&D receipts. That's a blockbusting concept.

In 1982, for example, MIT was second in federal R&D, with $148 million and Stanford was third, with $124 million. (Johns Hopkins was, as usual, first, with $312 million, but that's because the figure includes the huge Applied Physics Laboratory that it runs for the Navy.)

Down at the bottom 10 of the list were institutions in the $10-$20 million range, such as UC Santa Barbara, No. 92, with $13 million, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln, No. 99, with $11 million. Beyond the bottom of that list of 100 are many universities that receive piddling amounts, and then there are hundreds that get nothing at all. Assuming a happy outcome for the Fuqua bill, which means $1 billion a year in new funds for laboratory construction, that means at least $150 million a year for the present outcasts.

Since the bill involves agencies outside the jurisdic-

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## Many Studies, Few Results

The study of academe's needs for new laboratory facilities hasn't produced many facilities, but it has produced many reports.

The usual source is academic lobbying organizations, such as the Association of American Universities, the National Academy of Sciences, or the federal research agencies. But one of the latest in this genre, "Survey of Cancer Research Facilities Needs," issued in March, has different origins. It was produced by a Washington-area consulting firm, CDP Associates Inc., which was hired for the task by Armand Hammer, the Occidental Petroleum tycoon, who chairs the President's Cancer Panel.

Hammer insists that the cancer program is underfinanced and has been trying to drum up support for bigger budgets for the National Cancer Institute. NCI was going to conduct a facilities survey when the Office of Management and Budget, wise to that ploy, directed NCI to cancel it on the grounds that the subject was already getting abundant attention elsewhere in the federal science bureaucracy. Hammer then chipped in $75,000 for the study and got a matching $75,000 from the American Cancer Society.

The CDP report says that in 1984, cancer research occupied 10.4 million square feet of space devoted to basic and clinical research, animal facilities and administration, and employed "over 30,000" research and support staff. The 197 institutions that it surveyed, CDP says, estimated that by 1990, they will require another 6 million feet of new and renovated space, along with 14,600 additional staff people.

Three-quarters of existing cancer-research space was constructed within the past 15 years, the report states, and about one-fourth "needs substantial work—alteration, renovation, or total replacement."

# . . . Europe Looking for Ways to Pool R&D Efforts

*(Continued from page 1)*

which feel they have something to offer, or gain, from SDI are already straining to share in the Pentagon's bountiful budget—French firms included. Europe's governments will, in the main, place no barriers in the way of such entrepreneurial zeal, but they're making it clear that what's involved is business, rather than national policy or participation in America's strategic planning.

While Europe's high-tech markets sniff out SDI, its wary political leaders have found inspiration for further thinking about the old subject of how to pool their strength for collaboration on long-range research projects. The latest discussions of this venerable, and usually sterile, topic were initiated by France, which combined its rejection of SDI with a proposal for a pan-European research program to be called EUREKA (SGR Vol. XV, No. 10). Derived somewhat tortuously from European Research Coordinating Agency, EUREKA is intended to orchestrate the best elements of European expertise in such areas as optics, computing, materials, and energy systems. But, rather than concentrating on military goals, EUREKA would mainly aim for commercial developments.

Given the vagueness of the French alternative to SDI participation, along with many memories of similarly ambitious cross-boundary schemes that came to naught, the initial response was cool. But now Britain, West Germany, and Italy have come around to the position that EUREKA may not be such a bad proposition, after all. One reason is that the venture may already have a headstart in the recent launch of one of the more hopeful European ventures in high technology—the 10-nation research program known as ESPRIT, which is being coordinated by the European Commission, in Brussels. Focused on computing technology, it is budgeted for about $1.5 billion over the next five years, with governments and industry sharing the costs.

## *EUREKA-ESPRIT Tie-in?*

With the participation of industrial firms and research institutes from several nations, ESPRIT is paying for a number of individual research projects in areas such as factory automation and office equipment. Since ESPRIT went into operation only last year—after a characteristically difficult European birth—it will be some time before results can be expected. But it is already being hailed as step forward in stitching together R&D talents in different countries—usually a very difficult task in this part of the world. With the early reports favorable, the thought has been growing that EUREKA might easily be tacked onto ESPRIT to produce a wide-ranging program of scientific and technological collaboration.

The most tangible evidence so far of flesh on the EUREKA framework comes from 4 of Europe's biggest electronics firms—General Electric of Britain, Thomson of France, Siemans of West Germany, and Philips of the Netherlands. They have set up an informal group to suggest pan-European projects that might be supported under EUREKA. Topics examined so far include cellular radio and other telecommunications systems, high-speed rail systems, computer-controlled highway routing, and energy projects, such as solar-conversion devices in space.

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## *Facilities*

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tion of the Science and Technology Committee, it has also been referred to three other committees—Energy and Commerce, Armed Services, and Agriculture. They can defer to Fuqua or dig into it themselves; it's too early to tell, but it's doubtful that they will be hostile to the idea of rebuilding the science buildings on America's campuses.

The July 30 hearing will be brief and easily overshadowed by a mid-summer Congress coming down to the wire on difficult budget issues. The hearing is simply for taking a first step and commencing the process of getting attention and rallying supporters. Fuqua has tentative plans for more elaborate proceedings in September.
—DSG

ISSN 0048-9581

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Editor and Publisher
**Daniel S. Greenberg**

Associate Publisher
**Wanda J. Reif**

Contributing Correspondents
**Francois Seguier (Paris); Ros Herman (London)**

Independently published by *Science & Government Report, Inc.*, twice monthly, except once each in January, July & August. Annual subscription: Institutions, $158.00 (two years, $275.00). Information about bulk and individual rates upon request. Editorial offices at 3736 Kanawha St. N.W., Washington, DC 20015. Tel. (202) 244-4135. Second-class postage at Washington, D.C. Please address all subscription correspondence to Box 6226A. Northwest Station, Washington, DC 20015. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. SGR is available on Xerox University Microfilms. Claims for missing back issues will be filled without charge if made within six months of publication date.

# . . . SDI Team Seeking to Enlist European Talent

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On a visit to London last month, Abrahamson devoted most of his time to contesting skepticism about the workability of the Star Wars defense. "Absolutely not," Abrahamson insisted in response to questions about whether the US had scaled back the ambitions of the research program. Star Wars is still aimed at protecting cities rather than merely providing a "point defense" of missile silos and other key military targets, the General said.

Abrahamson, by now a veteran performer on the Star Wars circuit, said he's optimistic about the program and said that the critics are "not neutral observers." He likened the doubters to those who didn't have faith in the Wright Brothers.

Speaking to a largely non-technical audience at a public meeting in London, Abrahamson sought to translate some of Star Wars' esoteric points into everyday terminology. Thus, he likened a slide presentation of a particle accelerator to "something out of a Frankenstein movie," and he confessed to a special liking for an excimer laser under development at Western Research Corporation, San Diego. "I call it my cheap, sloppy laser," he said.

## *European Role*

Abrahamson and company provided a few clues about the R&D chores that SDI would like to assign to European partners, but details were sparse. The General said that a British research group could aid the US effort in the technology of rail guns—weapons that utilize electromagnetic forces to fire projectiles at ultra-high speeds. The group was later revealed to be the Ministry of Defense Royal Armaments R&D Establishment. Some discussions have taken place over a linkup with Star Wars, but no formal collaboration has been agreed to.

More revealing in identifying UK expertise of interest to Star Wars was one of Abrahamson's senior staff members, the enthusiastic James Ionson, Director of the SDI Office of Innovative Science and Technology (See SGR Vol. XV, No. 7 for a long and revealing Q. and A. with Ionson). Ionson came across as a great admirer of R&D in Britain, particularly in computing, and said that he's open to suggestions from British researchers. He said that of the $187 million he's hoping to get from Congress next year, he has earmarked about $50 million for awards to groups in Europe. That is, of course, a colossal sum by European standards—and in terms of buying power for the US program, the sum is magnified by the strength of the dollar.

## SDI Junket for Euro Press

The United States Information Agency is organizing a cross-country junket to Star Wars facilities this fall for journalists from Western Europe. Final arrangements were being made in Europe last week by a Pentagon liaison officer to USIA, Lt. Col. Bill Hudson.

A USIA official told SGR that press officers at various US embassies were putting Hudson in touch with candidates for the trip, which will include about 8-12 foreign journalists. Expenses for the trip are met in different ways, he said, ranging from news organizations paying their own costs, to outside assistance of one sort or another, including money from US embassy funds. The trip is expected to last about 7-10 days, and will take in the major centers working on the missile-defense project.

Journalistic tours are no rarity for USIA, but most often they involve Third World reporters who otherwise would have little chance of seeing the US. The Star War tour comes at a time when European governments have rejected US invitations to take part in the program.

Ionson's organization has had discussions with one leading member of Britain's computer-research community, Professor Desmond Smith, a researcher in optical computers at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt University. Optical computing methods could greatly speed up electronic processing and play a part in control systems for the Star Wars defensive network. What followed the Ionson-Smith deliberations provides a tangled tale of science, patriotism, and money.

Late in May, at a meeting in Edinburgh with Keith Bromely, a US Navy scientist who serves as Ionson's representative in Britain, Smith was offered $150,000 to last until the end of the year, with more to follow. He was told that if he got his application form in to Washington within a week, the money would be delivered within a month.

Smith apparently decided to accept the offer, for a few days later, he publicly said, "The consequences of this could be that the technology is lost to Europe. But funding is difficult to come by in Britain, so what choice do we have?"

But after having gone that far, Smith apparently became sensitive to suggestions that the arrangement could lead to his technology becoming commercialized in the US rather than in Europe. At this point, the status of the deal is not known.—Peter Marsh

(The author is technology correspondent of the *Financial Times* of London.)

# Senator Gore Renews Push for Bioethics Panel

Elected to the House at age 28 in 1976, Albert Gore Jr. (D-Tenn.) achieved political notice by drumming on the issues of scientific ethics and fraud, industry megabucks on campus, and the safety and social implications of genetic engineering. Elected to the Senate last November, he has now taken the first step toward reasserting that role—pompously referred to by some as "the conscience of science"—with a renewed proposal to establish a national advisory commission on bioethics.

Until the Republicans took over the Senate in 1981, medical ethics and related subjects were dominated in that chamber by Senator Edward Kennedy, who used his chairmanship of the Labor and Human Resources Committee to prod NIH on these issues. But the issues have since faded from Kennedy's agenda.

Gore, through his membership on the Governmental Affairs Committee, is again pushing a creation he strongly supported in his House career—a national bioethics panel to replace that defunct, terminologically daunting, but highly influential body, the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

## *Along OTA Lines*

Toward this goal, Gore has introduced a bill (S. 1255) to create a new agency, titled the National Commission on Bioethics. Its brief would include many of the ethical issues that the old President's Commission tackled, particularly the increasingly controversial subject of human genetic engineering. Organized along the lines of the Office of Technology Assessment—i.e., linked to Congress but not smotheringly close to it, and independent of the Executive Branch—the 15-member Commission would be appointed by a board of Senators and Representatives.

The membership would be tilted in favor of nonresearchers, in contrast to NIH's Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, which is saturated with members drawn from the fields it is charged with regulating. Gore's Commission would include only 4 biomedical researchers; the balance would consist of 3 physicians, 6 lawyers, theologians, or ethicists, and 2 members of the "general public." The annual budget would be $2 million, and the Commission's first task would be a study of human genetic engineering.

While he was still in the House last year, Gore won full Congressional passage for a virtually identical proposal, under the title there of the Biomedical Ethics Advisory Committee. But it was wiped out as part of a general NIH authorization bill that President Reagan successfully vetoed mainly in protest against the establishment of new institutes for arthritis and nursing at NIH. The NIH bill, with the proposed advisory committee included, was passed again this year by the House.

In the Senate, which is yet to take up the NIH authorization, Republican sources tell SGR that a veto seems less likely this time. One reason is that with 5 separate though not always congruous passages in the House and Senate over the past four years, Capitol Hill has loudly signaled its support for a separate arthritis institute; the votes and sentiments are less emphatic in regard to the nursing proposal, which is absent from the Senate bill. In addition, NIH, through its resistance, has gotten across the message that after arthritis, and perhaps nursing, it could really use a long respite from institute building. In the event of veto or a logjam, Gore's proposal could proceed on its own, but given the increasingly chaotic state of the Congressional agenda, it's probably better off as part of the highly visible and long overdue NIH authorization bill.

The old Commission, established during the Carter Administration, was an outgrowth of a Department of Health and Human Services board that was charged with writing rules to protect human research subjects. With ample staff and a generous jurisdiction, the Commission produced a series of widely praised analyses of such politically sensitive issues as the right to die, equality of access to health care, human genetic engineering, and genetic screening. The Reagan Administration scotched Congressional efforts—which were never more than half-hearted—to renew the Commission when it expired in 1982.

## *The Rifkin Factor*

In the last few years, however, sentiments for revival have increased. According to Alex Capron, a lawyer who served as Executive Director of the Commission, recently successful law suits by Jeremy Rifkin, the bane of genetic engineering (SGR Vol. XV, Nos. 3,4), have increased interest in recreating a high-level body to monitor the field. Capron says a revived Commission would be a shield against Rifkin and cohorts "hijacking" the issue, and it would also drain off pressures for extensive government regulations.

Confronting the breach, NIH's Recombinant Advisory Committee, which was created to regulate laboratory research involving recombinant DNA, has attempted a modest expansion of its role. It has appointed an ethicist to its ranks, LeRoy Walters, Director of the Center for Bioethics at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute, and it has issued a preliminary list of "points to

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# High-Energy Finance: GAO Presents a Portrait

Concerned about the heavy budget bite of high-energy physics, Senator J. Bennett Johnson, of Louisiana, last year asked the General Accounting Office to take a look at that ravenous discipline. The result is *DOE's Physics Accelerators: Their Costs and Benefits,* a report whose title reflects the Senator's basic inquiry. It doesn't settle the necessity or extravagance issue that has always dogged high-energy physics, but it does pull together a lot of widely scattered and illuminating data about costs.

The high-energy crowd, always on full alert against serious questioning of their prodigal pastime, responded to the Senator's question about benefits with a barrage of claims ranging from cancer therapy to the enrichment of the soul. They even tossed in some old paeans of praise from their captive agency in Washington, the Department of Energy, which in a 1980 exercise on this theme described basic science as "one of the positive constructive elements in the time when so many values are undermined and overthrown."

The inquiry, however, was not futile, for Senator Johnson, ranking Democrat on the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, did manage, through GAO, to obtain a good financial portrait of high-energy physics. Some of the main items:

• DOE's total annual expenditures in this field have risen from $421 million in fiscal 1983 to an estimated $545 million in the present fiscal year, 1985; $373 million of that amount is for operating costs; the balance is for construction, planning the big new Superconducting Super Collider, and various other non-operating items. Since 1983, overall growth in the high-energy physics budget has totaled 29 percent in current dollars, or 22 percent after adjustment for inflation.

• Three big accelerators will receive about $246 million of this year's budget for operating costs: Brookhaven, $57 million; Fermilab, $112 million, and Stanford, $77 million. The facilities at these three centers originally cost a total of $390 million; additions and "upgrades" over the years have cost $603 million.

• DOE also provided $126 million in operating funds for about 90 universities and other organizations engaged in physics research and accelerator and equipment develoment.

• The Superconducting Super Collider, the next big machine on the high-energy agenda, is estimated to cost $4 billion in 1985 dollars. The report quotes DOE as estimating that construction and the initial equipment cost will total $3.5 billion. "DOE anticipates spending another $398 million to $450 million for research and development prior to and during construction and $225 million in pre-operating cost for such functions as testing the various subsystems and staff training."

• Also mentioned is the other new high-energy physics project on the DOE agenda, the Continuous Electron Beam Accelerator Facility, for which a site has been selected at Newport News, Va., but for which startup construction money was withheld at the last minute this year. The GAO report cagily notes that "if approved by Congress," the Virginia accelerator is expected to require $220 million for construction and $30-35 million a year for operations.

Once it's running—starting date probably in the mid-

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## *Bioethics* *(Continued from page 5)*

consider" for researchers submitting proposals for human-gene-therapy experiments. Any such experiments carried out at institutions that receive federal funds require approval by RAC, by the local Institutional Review Board, and the Institutional Biosafety Committee of the Food and Drug Administration.

At least one research group, headed by Ted Friedmann of UC San Diego, has reportedly secured its local Review Board's permission to proceed with a human-gene-therapy trial, but RAC says it has not been approached.

After its initial assignment, human genetic engineering, the Gore Commission would take up fetal research. Under rules established by HHS a decade ago, no federally funded research may cause more than minimal or unknown risks to fetuses. The HHS Secretary is permitted to grant waivers in cases that have passed scrutiny by a special HHS ethics panel. But every Secretary has ducked the issue by not appointing the panel.

Senate-House differences over fetal research have in past years delayed NIH's reauthorization bills. Right-to-lifers in the Senate have insisted on a total ban. The bill passed by the House this year nods to that position with a 3-year moratorium. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), who chairs the NIH authorization subcommittee, says he dislikes the moratorium and regards it as a kind of government-imposed scientific censorship.

But Waxman says he hopes that a dispassionate review of fetal research by the proposed National Commission on Bioethics would cool tempers around the issue, and that at the end of the moratorium, HHS would feel confident to consider waivers without regard to the "purely political pressures" that, Waxman says, are now decisive.

# OTA Director Named to Second 6-Year Appointment

John H. Gibbons has been appointed to a second 6-year term as Director of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), thus setting a tenure record at that research outpost on Capitol Hill. Gibbons, a physicist and environmentalist formerly at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, is the first of the 3 chiefs OTA has had since its founding in 1972 to serve out a full term.

His predecessors were Emilio Q. Daddario, a former Congressman, and Russell W. Peterson, a politician turned environmentalist. Neither thrived with the difficult task of trying to serve up dispassionate, disinterested studies for a Congress that thrives on partisanship.

Gibbons' reign has been assisted by the growing Congressional realization that OTA is indeed a useful adjunct to the legislative process. Its fullscale studies—many, detailed and often 2-3 years in the works—are usually crammed with enough data to nourish all sides of any controversy. Explicit conclusions and recommendations, forbidden by OTA's charter, are either absent or written between the lines of these behemoth documents. But quickie productions, which usually don't bear the imprint of OTA's bipartisan House-Senate board, can be different. Such was the case last year with a Star Wars "background" paper that infuriated the Pentagon (SGR Vol. XIV, No. 12) and led last spring to the resignation of a Star Wars enthusiast, retired General Daniel Graham, from an OTA advisory board supervising the missile-defense study.

Another factor in OTA's acceptance on Capitol Hill is Gibbons' bending to the reality that regardless of what the charter says, Congress is not interested in a distant early warnings of technological problems likely to bloom long after the today's legislators have left office. "They want answers for the here and now and have no interest in what might be coming in 25 years," Gibbons says.

## OTA Pours Out Reports

*OTA has recently produced a bumper crop of major reports that have been in the work for several years, including the following titles:*

- **Strategic Materials: Technologies to Reduce US Import Vulnerability (OTA-ITE-248), 409 pages**
- **US Natural Gas Availability: Gas Supply Through the Year 2000 (OTA-E-245), 252 pages**
- **Managing the Nation's Commercial High-Level Radioactive Waste (OTA-O-171), 348 pages**
- **Oil and Gas Technologies for the Arctic and Deepwater (OTA-O-270), 227 pages**
- **Technology and Aging in America (OTA-BA-264), 496 pages**

OTA reports are available from the US Government Printing Office. For information about other OTA reports: Office of Technology Assessment, Publications Office, US Congress, Washington, DC 20510; tel. 202/226-2115.

### *Physics*

1990s—SSC's annual operating costs are estimated at $202 million, plus another $58 million in other costs, all in 1985 dollars. Since operating costs for Fermi, Stanford, and Brookhaven are expected to rise, the prospect of the Super taking up close to half of what's now spent on high-energy physics explains the concern on Capitol Hill.

The report offers no conclusions, but it does include an observation that suggests perhaps a bit of skepticism on the part of the anonymous GAO investigators. Under the heading "Societal value," the report states: "The physics community often refers to the societal value of their fields. This value is—as with any basic science—impossible to fully quantify or, for that matter, render a judgment as to the signficance of its worth."

(The GAO report, 84 pages, GAO/RCED-85-96, April 1, 1985, is available without charge from USGAO, Document Handling and Information Services Facility, PO Box 6015, Gaithersburg, Md. 20877; tel. 202/275-6241)


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# The NIH Name Game: Fending Off the Lobbies

It looks like a good season is coming up for the sign painters and stationers of Bethesda. The House has again voted to establish new NIH institutes focused on arthritis and nursing, and the Senate is likely to go along. A Reagan veto was the fate of a previous try for this goal, but the odds for acceptance are said to be good this time—which would add a chapter to the venerable and ludicrous name game of biomedical politics.

The game has flourished over many years as NIH desperately offered names on the door to placate disease lobbies that wanted their own institutes on the Bethesda campus. Institutes are equated with visibility, which is supposed to translate into money from Congress, and, not incidentally, glory for the lay and professional celebrities and climbers that cluster around such enterprises along with the selfless workers.

According to a study last year by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, "Since 1970, there have been at least 23 new institutes proposed for NIH, 13 through the legislative process and 10 by other means." Eleven of the proposals were made since 1980. The NIH management welcomes the money, but already has its hands full with tear-jerking lobbyists clamoring to set Bethesda's priorities. As did his predecessor Donald S. Fredrickson, NIH Director James B. Wyngaarden often tells Congress that biomedical research has evolved to a point where the big payoffs are to be had from studying basic biological processes, all the way down to the molecular level, rather than by focusing on particular diseases. The message has not registered on Capitol Hill, where NIH is sometimes suspected of being more interested in science than in sickness, but there are signs of progress.

As far as wholly new institutes are concerned, NIH has held the line since 1974, when the National Institute on Aging was established. But the record is filled with many name changes before and since. Thus, the National Heart Institute, founded in 1948, became the National Heart and Lung Institute in 1969, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in 1976.

The National Institute of Neurological Disease and Blindness, founded in 1950, dropped "Blindness" in 1968 when the National Eye Institute was established, and emerged from the reorganization as the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke; in 1975, it was renamed the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke.

The National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, founded in 1950, became the National Institute of Arthritis, Metabolism, and Digestive Diseases in 1972. A decade later, it was retitled the National Institute of Arthritis, Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The disappearance of "Metabolism" can be directly traced to the absence of a lobby for that biological process.

Over the past few years, the arthritis industry, though deferential to diabetes, digestive and kidney diseases, has lobbied for a less-crowded castle in Bethesda. Its original proposal called simply for creating a National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases. To muster Congressional interest it brought in as a witness Senator Barry Goldwater, still on crutches from a double hip-joint replacement. But then the dermatologists complained that nowhere on the Bethesda campus is recognition given to their disease—which, according to statistics they mustered, is draining the national economy.

The House bill was reworked, and out came a proposal to establish a National Institute of Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases.—DSG

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